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(54) Improvements in or relating to tube couplings

(57) The disclosure relates to a tube coupling (10) comprising a coupling body having an open ended (12) throughway (11) to receive a tube (13), an annular shoulder (14) in the throughway facing the open end of the throughway, an 'O' ring seal (18) for sealing with a tube located against the annular shoulder in the throughway and a collet (25) located in the open end of the throughway for locking a tube in the throughway. The collet has a head (26) projecting out of the open end of the throughway and resilient arms (27) extend into the throughway to engage a tapered cam surface (29) adjacent said open end to force the arms inwardly with movement of the collet outwardly of the throughway into gripping engagement with a tube. A ring (19) is disposed in the throughway between the collet and 'O' ring seal, one side of the ring adjacent the collet having a ramp (19a) around its inner periphery to engage the ends of the collet arms when the collet is depressed into the throughway to release the arms from the tube and thereby allow release of a tube from the coupling body and the other side of the ring having a ramp (19b) around its inner periphery to engage the O ring seal (18) to hold the seal in alignment in the throughway when the collet is depressed into the throughway.

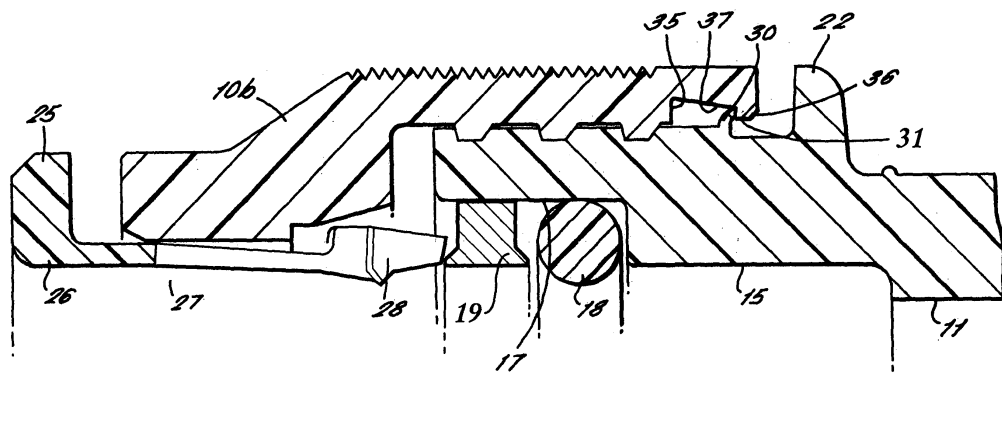


FIG. 3

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Description

[0001] This invention relates to tube couplings.

[0002] UK-A-1520742 discloses a "Speedfit" connector comprising a coupling body with a throughway open at one end and a tapered cam surface in the open end to receive a collet for locking a tube in the coupling. The collet is compressed against the tube by a slight withdrawal of the tube/collet from the coupling body which locks the tube in the coupling body. The collet can be depressed into the body to release the tube when required.

[0003] UK-A-2167147 discloses a "SuperSeal" connector which is a modification of the "Speedfit" connector and has a separate sleeve screwed into the open end of the coupling body in which the tapered cam is formed. By screwing the sleeve into the coupling body the gripping action of the collet on the tube is increased. Also the collet becomes locked up in the coupling body and cannot be depressed to release the tube. The tube is then permanently locked in the coupling body.

[0004] EP-A-0945662 discloses a tube coupling having both "Speedfit" and SuperSeal" modes of operation. More particularly the coupling comprises a coupling body having a throughway open at one end to receive an end portion of a tube and having an internal cam surface tapering towards the open end in which a collet is located for locking the tube in the coupling body by engagement with the tapered cam surface and having stop means to limit entry of the collet into the throughway. The coupling body has a main portion, the throughway of which receives the end of the tube and contains said stop means to limit insertion of the collet and an end cap in screw threaded engagement with the main body. The end cap provides said open end to the throughway and the tapered cam surface. Indexing means are provided between the end cap and the main body to define different positions of rotation of adjustment in the first of which the tube can be inserted in and by depressing the collet into the coupling body, released in the coupling body (i.e. "Speedfit" mode) and in the second of which the collet is engaged with the stop means to prevent the collet being depressed into the coupling body to release the tube (i.e. "SuperSeal" mode).

[0005] EP-A-1398559 discloses a tube coupling comprising a coupling body having a throughway open at one end to receive a tube, an end cap in screw-threaded engagement with the coupling body to move between initial and advanced positions along the coupling body and having an opening for the tube and an internal cam surface tapering towards the tube opening, a collet in the end cap engaging the cam surface to lock a tube in the cap with movement of the collet outwardly of the cap and to release the tube when depressed inwardly of the cap, and stop means in the coupling body to limit movement of the collet inwardly of the end cap, the initial position of the end cap on the coupling body allowing a tube to be inserted and locked in the end cap by the collet and to be released by depressing the collet inwardly of the cap and the advanced position of the end cap holding the collet adjacent the stop means in the coupling body to prevent release of the tube; wherein detent means are provided acting between the cap and coupling body to provide resistance to movement of the cap along the coupling body until the cap reaches said initial position on the coupling body and to allow said further movement of the cap to the advanced position.

[0006] This invention provides a tube coupling comprising a coupling body having an open ended throughway to receive a tube, an annular shoulder in the throughway facing the open end of the throughway, an 'O' ring seal for sealing with a tube located against the annular shoulder in the throughway, a collet located in the open end of the throughway for locking a tube in the throughway, the collet having a head projecting out of the open end of the throughway and resilient arms extending into the throughway, the throughway having a cam surface tapered towards the open end of the throughway and located between the annular shoulder and open end with which the ends of the arms are engagable to force the arms inwardly with movement of the collet outwardly of the throughway into gripping engagement with a tube extending through the collet into the throughway, and a ring disposed between the collet and 'O' ring seal, the side of the ring adjacent the collet having a ramp around its inner periphery to engage between the ends of the arms of the collet and the tube passing through the collet when the collet is depressed into the throughway to release the arms from the tube and thereby allow release of a tube from the coupling body.

[0007] Additionally the side of the ring adjacent the 'O' ring may also be formed with a ramp around its inner periphery to engage the inner side of the 'O' ring seal and prevent the 'O' ring seal from being forced passed the shoulder in the coupling body into the throughway beyond the shoulder.

[0008] Preferably the sides of the ring including the projecting ramps are symmetrical to either side of the ring.

[0009] In any of the above arrangements the ring may be of rectangular cross-section with the ramp or ramps formed integrally on one or both sides of the ring adjacent the inner periphery of the ring, the ramp or ramps facing outwardly of the ring.

[0010] Also in any of the above arrangements the throughway may have a further annular shoulder encircling the throughway disposed beyond the first annular shoulder from the open end of the throughway with which an end of a tube inserted into the coupling body is engageable.

[0011] In one arrangement in accordance with the invention the coupling body may comprise a main body portion containing the first annular shoulder, O ring seal and ring and an end cap in screw threaded engagement with the main portion of the coupling body to enable the cap to be screwed on or off the main body portion, the cap containing said

open end for the throughway, tapered cam surface and collet having resilient arms which engage with the taper cam surface in the cap.

[0012] In the latter arrangement detent means may be provided acting between the cap and main body portion of the coupling body to resist the cap being withdrawn fully from the coupling body whilst allowing the cap to be screwed onto the coupling body and screwed off the coupling body by a limited distance.

[0013] More specifically the detent means may comprise an integral annular diaphragm formed on one of the coupling body end cap engageable in slots formed in the other of the main body portion and cap, the diaphragm allowing the cap to be screwed onto and off the coupling body within the range of movement permitted by the slot.

[0014] In the latter arrangement the depth of the slot reduces to one side of the slot to increase the pressure on the flexible diaphragm as the diaphragm moves to the reduced depth side of the slot to increase resistance to the cap moving off the main body portion and vice versa.

[0015] The following is a description of some specific embodiments of the invention, reference being made to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a tube coupling in accordance with the invention including a tube inserted in the coupling;

Figure 2 is a detailed view of part of a coupling body of the tube coupling;

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view through part of the tube coupling showing a cap on the coupling body in the first "Speedfit" position; and

Figure 4 is a cross-sectional view through part of the coupling body showing the cap in the second "SuperSeal" position, and

Figure 5 shows a modified form of the end cap of the coupling body.

[0016] Referring firstly to Figure 1 of the drawings, there is shown a moulded plastics tube coupling indicated generally by reference numeral 10 having a throughway 11 open at one end 12 to receive an end portion of a tube 13. The coupling comprises a main body 10a and an end cap 10b screwed onto the main body as described below.

[0017] At a location spaced from the open end, the throughway in the main body has a first increase in diameter at a step 14 to provide an enlarged bore 15 in which the end of the tube 13 is a close sliding fit with the end of the tube engaging the step 14. The throughway has a further increase in diameter at a step 16 to form a further enlarged bore 17 in which an 'O' ring seal 18 is located against the step followed by a spacer washer or compression ring 19.

[0018] A collet indicated at 25 is mounted in the open end of the coupling body comprising an annular member 26 and resilient arms 27 projecting from the annular member into the throughway of the coupling body and terminating in heads 28. The heads of the collet engage in a tapered cam surface 29 formed in the throughway and converging towards the end of the coupling body to be compressed by the cam surface against the tube 13 to lock the tube in the coupling body.

[0019] The spacer washer or compression ring 19 is of rectangular cross-section and has shallow outwardly facing ramps 19a, 19b formed around its inner periphery. The ramp adjacent the heads of the collet can engage under the heads when the collet is depressed into the coupling body to assist in releasing the grip of the collet arms with the tube passing through the collet. This is of particular significance in the case where the tube is of a relatively soft material and the teeth on the collet heads bite into the surface of the tube and do not automatically release from the surface. The ramp 19b on the ring 19 adjacent the O ring seal engages the O ring seal on its inner side and will act to prevent the seal being forced over the shoulder with which it engages into the throughway in the coupling body.

[0020] The main body 10a has an external screw-threaded section 20 extending from one end of the body followed by a reduced diameter plain section 21 in which a detent is formed as described later and followed in turn by an integral encircling radial flange 22. The flange 22 has an abutment face 23 to provide an end stop for the cap when the latter is fully screwed onto the coupling body as described below. The end cap 10b of the coupling body encircles the main body and has an internal feature for engaging with the detent on the main body portion again as described later.

[0021] Reference is now made to Figure 2 of the drawings which is a cross-sectional view through part of the main body portion 10a. Between the end of the screw threaded section 20 on the main body and the flange 22 there is an upstanding annular flexible diaphragm 30 formed integrally with the body. The diaphragm forms part of the detent arrangement referred to above for engaging with and locking the cap on the body as described later.

[0022] Turning now to Figure 3 of the drawings, the end cap 10b is shown partially screwed onto the body to an initial position in which the collet in the cap receives and holds a tube in the coupling body in the "Speedfit" manner. That is to say, the tube is locked in the coupling body but can be released by depressing the collet into the coupling body to release the gripping engagement of the collet with the tube and allow the tube to be withdrawn.

[0023] The end cap 10a has a mouth 31 with a lip around the inner periphery of the mouth. The inner side 34 of the end cap has an encircling slot 35 adjacent the mouth, in which the annular diaphragm 30 is snap engageable. The mouth of the cap has a bevelled entry indicated at 36 to assist in deforming the diaphragm inwardly as the cap is screwed onto the body and the diaphragm is forced through the mouth of the cap. The diameter of the lip at the mouth of the cap at

the entry is less than the diameter of the diaphragm but is slightly greater than the rest of the inner diameter of the cap to facilitate entry of the diaphragm into the slot.

[0024] Screwing the cap onto the body causes the diaphragm to snap into the slot 35 at the end nearest the mouth 31 of the cap. The cap is then located in the first "Speedfit" position referred to above. The bottom wall 37 of the slot is tapered to reduce in diameter towards the open end of the cap so that the diaphragm is held bent over towards the side of the slot adjacent the mouth of the slot. Thus, the diaphragm is trapped in the corner formed between the bottom wall of the slot and the side wall of the slot when the cap is rotated in a direction to withdraw from the main body to prevent withdrawal of the cap from the main body portion beyond the first position.

[0025] As the cap is screwed further onto the body, the diaphragm rides up the tapering undercut of the bottom wall of the slot in the cap relaxing the diaphragm slightly, and therefore reducing the resistance to rotation of the cap. The cap can then be screwed onto the body until it engages the upstanding end flange 22 of the coupling body as indicated in Figure 4 in which the cap is in the second or "SuperSeal" position. The collet is then held in engagement with the end stop in the coupling body and cannot be depressed to allow a tube to be released from the coupling body.

[0026] The arrangement thus provides a tube coupling body which is readily assembled and which provides both "Speedfit" and "SuperSeal" functions without unduly stressing the components of the body.

[0027] A number of further embodiments in the invention are also envisaged as follows:

[0028] This design can also be used on metal coupling bodies or rigid plastic coupling bodies in which case the flexible diaphragm could be moulded on a separate split ring which is assembled into a groove or recess on the body between the thread and the large flange so that the detent engages in the slot on the cap.

[0029] Equally the separate split ring could be mounted in the cap with the flexible diaphragm projecting radially inwardly to engage in a slot in the main body portion. The slot in the body portion would be located between the thread and the large flange. Again, the slot in the body could be tapered in diameter.

[0030] In all of the designs above the diaphragm could be interrupted once or several times to allow for tooling or to allow the diaphragm's resilient/flexible characteristics to be optimised.

[0031] In accordance with the further modification, an enlarged groove 30 is formed at the end of the slot remote from the open end of the cap as illustrated in Figure 5. When the cap is rotated provisionally to move the diaphragm into this position, the cap is in a non-load imposing position and thereby allows easy threading.

Claims

1. A tube coupling comprising a coupling body having an open ended throughway to receive a tube, an annular shoulder in the throughway facing the open end of the throughway, an 'O' ring seal for sealing with a tube located against the annular shoulder in the throughway, a collet located in the open end of the throughway for locking a tube in the throughway, the collet having a head projecting out of the open end of the throughway and resilient arms extending into the throughway, the throughway having a cam surface adjacent said open end which is tapered towards the open end of the throughway with which the ends of the arms are engagable to force the arms inwardly with movement of the collet outwardly of the throughway into gripping engagement with a tube extending through the collet into the throughway, and a ring disposed in the throughway between the collet and 'O' ring seal, one side of the ring adjacent the collet having a ramp around its inner periphery to engage the ends of the collet arms when the collet is depressed into the throughway to release the arms from the tube and thereby allow release of a tube from the coupling body and the other side of the ring having a ramp around its inner periphery to engage the O ring seal to hold the seal in alignment in the throughway when the collet is depressed into the throughway.
2. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ramp on the side of the ring adjacent the collet is formed to engage between the collet arms and tube passing through the collet to lift the collet arms from the tube when the collet is depressed into the throughway.
3. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ramp on the side of the ring adjacent the O ring is formed to engage between the O ring and tube to align the O ring in the throughway to prevent the O ring being forced past the shoulder in the coupling body.
4. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sides of the ring including the projecting ramps are symmetrical to either side of the ring.
5. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ring is of rectangular cross-section with the ramp or ramps formed integrally on one or both sides of the ring adjacent the inner periphery of the ring, the ramp or ramps facing outwardly of the ring.

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6. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 1, wherein the throughway has a further annular shoulder encircling the throughway disposed beyond the first annular shoulder from the open end of the throughway with which an end of a tube inserted into the coupling body is engageable.

5 7. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 1, wherein the coupling body comprises a main body portion containing the first annular shoulder, O ring seal and ring and an end cap in screw threaded engagement with the main portion of the coupling body to enable the cap to be screwed on or off the main body portion, the cap containing said open end for the throughway, tapered cam surface and collet having resilient arms which engage with the taper cam surface in the cap.

10 8. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 7, wherein detent means are provided acting between the cap and main body portion of the coupling body to resist the cap being withdrawn fully from the coupling body whilst allowing the cap to be screwed onto the coupling body and screwed off the coupling body by a limited distance.

15 9. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 8, wherein the detent means comprise an integral annular diaphragm formed on one of the coupling body end cap engageable in slots formed in the other of the main body portion and cap, the diaphragm allowing the cap to be screwed onto and off the coupling body within the range of movement permitted by the slot.

20 10. A tube coupling as claimed in claim 9, wherein the bottom facing the slot is inclined to one side of the slot engaged with the flexible diaphragm and provides an increasing resistance to screwing the cap onto the coupling body.

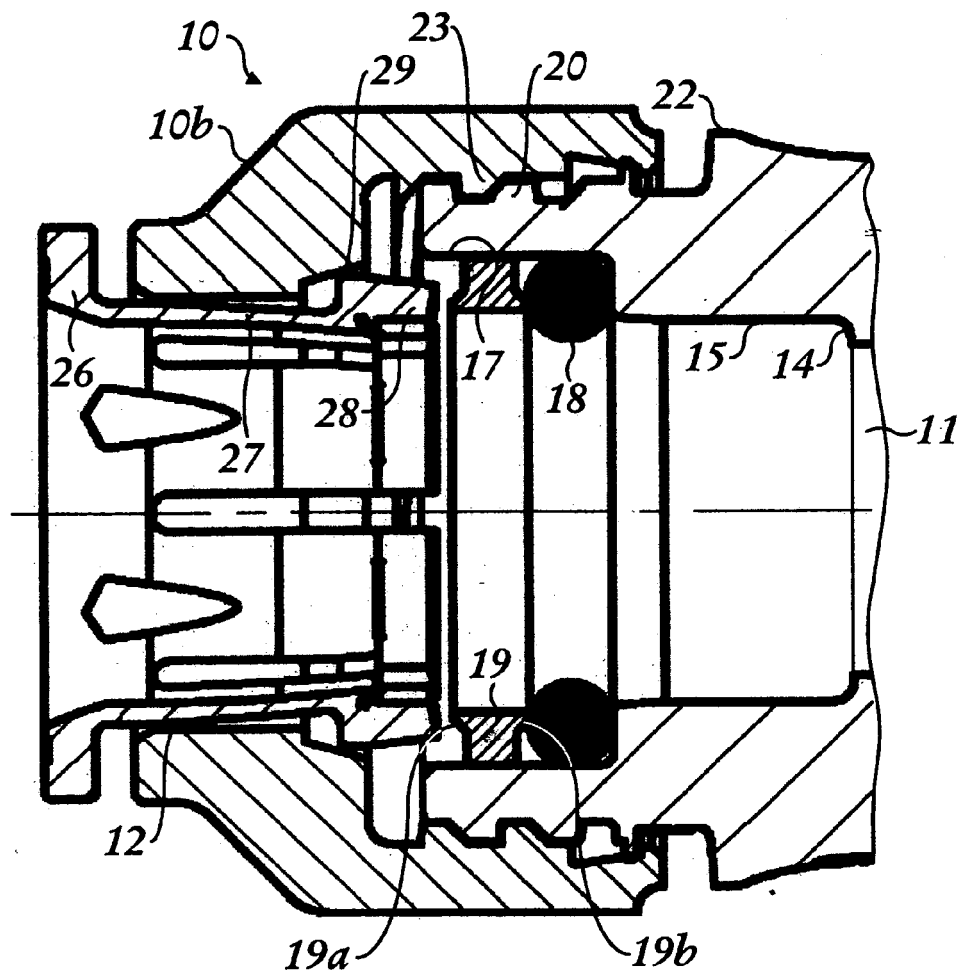


FIG. 1

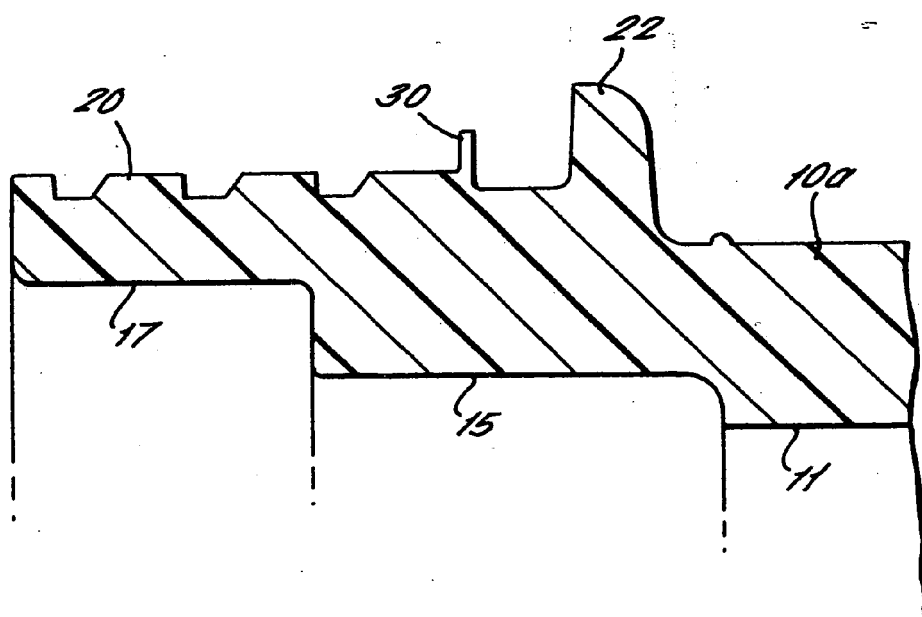


FIG. 2

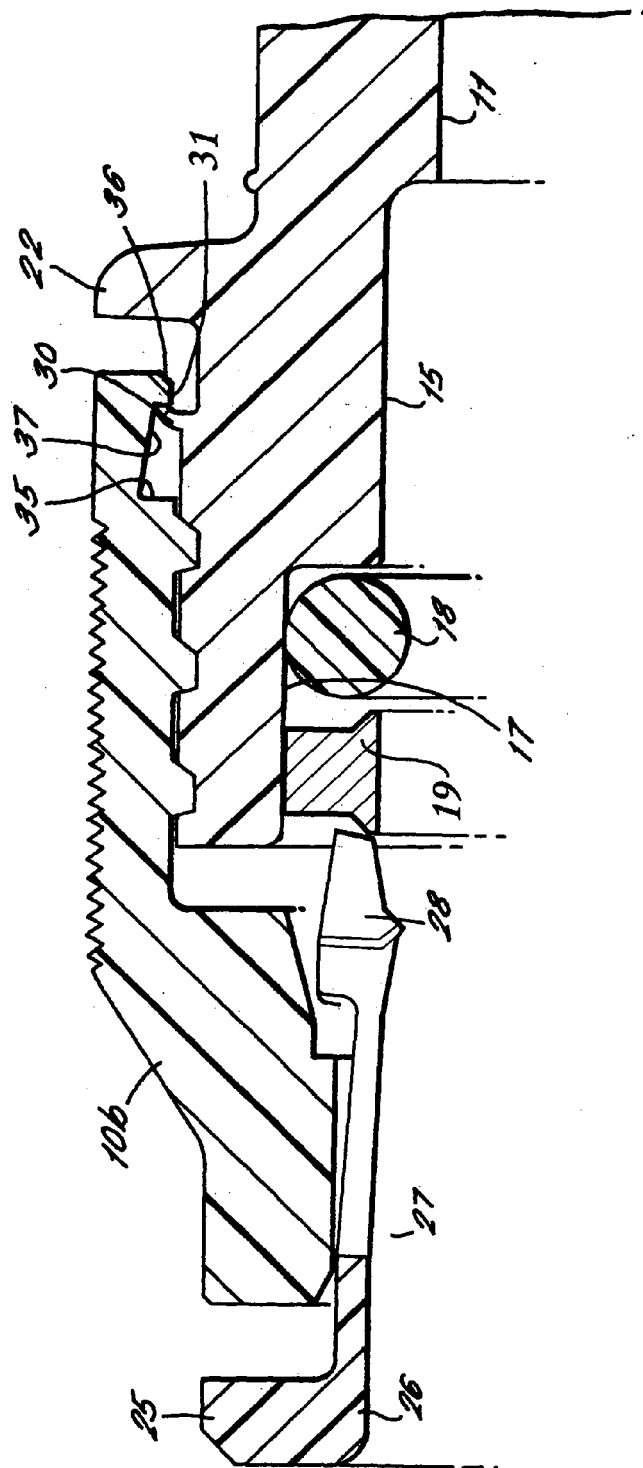


FIG. 3

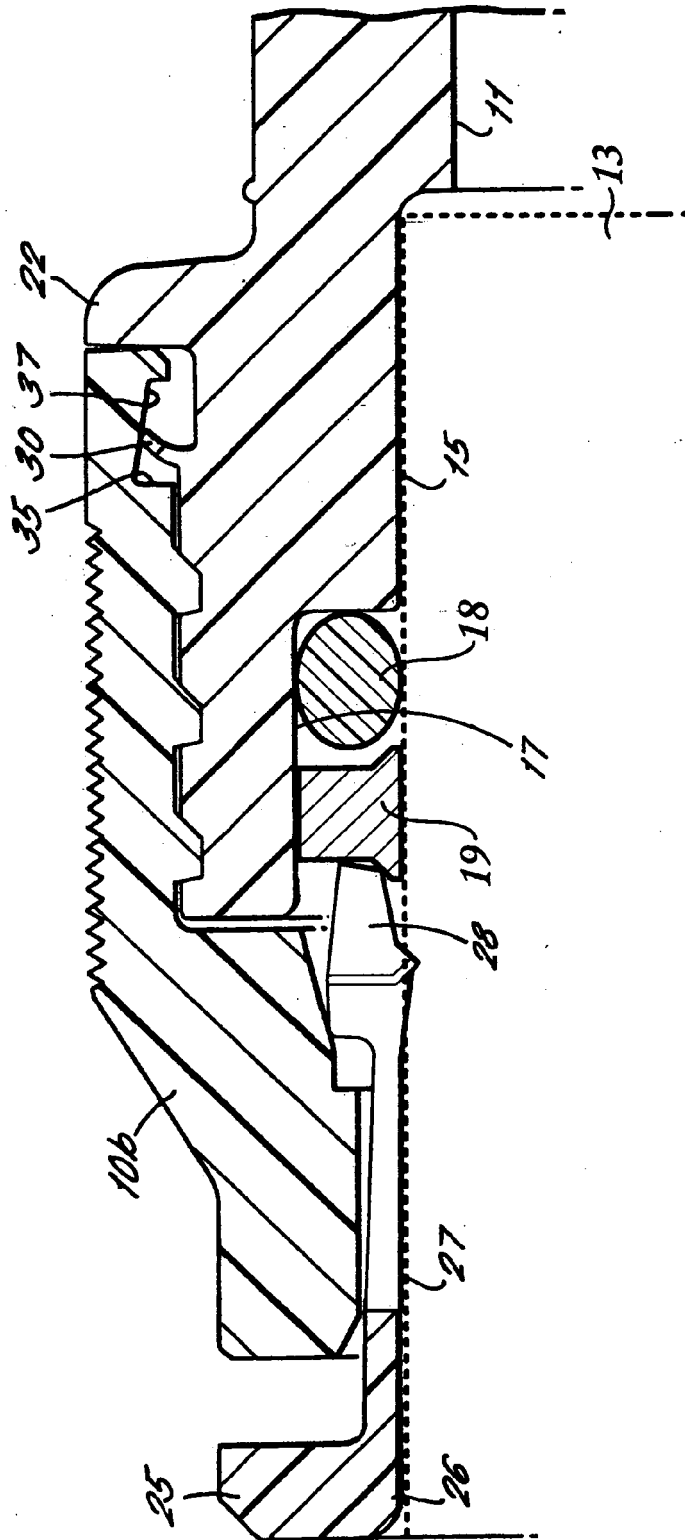


FIG. 4

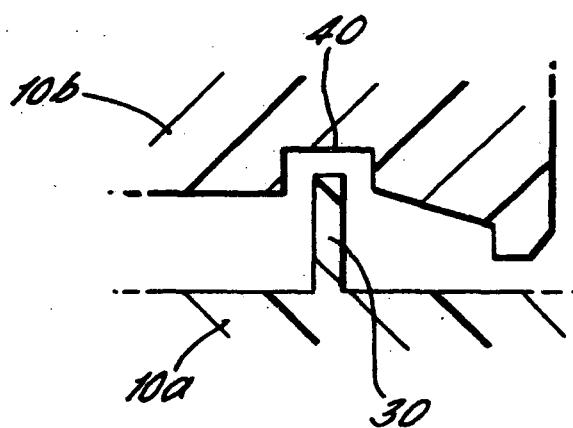


FIG. 5



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 06 25 0969

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Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (IPC)
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			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (IPC)
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 13 June 2006	Examiner Mauriès, L
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons ----- & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

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EPO FORM 1503 03.82 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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